

## Exploring Students' Usage Patterns of the Arabic Language in International Schools and Parental Perceptions of Arabic Language Importance

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### Abstract

This qualitative study focuses on investigating the Arabic language usage patterns among students enrolled in international schools and assessing parental attitudes towards the importance of the Arabic language. Two surveys and interviews were utilized, with the study sample selected using simple random sampling. Descriptive analysis was employed to examine responses and extract findings. The results indicate that most students prefer using English in their activities, with weaknesses observed in Arabic reading and writing skills due to vocabulary difficulty, grammatical structure, and insufficient training in these skills at school. Parental attitudes lean towards prioritizing English over Arabic, prompting the recommendation to enhance awareness among both parents and students regarding the importance of Arabic language proficiency. This proficiency is crucial for preserving national unity and the cultural identity of future generations, as language is an integral part of national identity. Once a lingua franca surpasses 50% usage, it rapidly achieves complete dominance within a single generation or less. This leads to a decline in cultural continuity and social cohesion.

*Keywords:* Bilingualism, international schools, identity, parent tongue, language deficiency

العنوان: استكشاف أنماط استخدام الطلاب الذين يدرسون في المدارس الدولية للغة العربية، واتجاهات الوالدين نحو اللغة العربية

### المخلص:

هذه الدراسة النوعية تستقصي أنماط استخدام الطلاب المسجلين في المدارس الدولية للغة العربية، وتقييم الاتجاهات الوالدية تجاه أهمية اللغة العربية، ولتحقيق هذا الهدف تم استخدام استبيانين، ومقابلات، تم اختيار عينة البحث بالطريقة العشوائية البسيطة، وتم استخدام التحليل الوصفي لفحص الردود واستخراج النتائج، تشير النتائج إلى أن غالبية أنشطة الطلاب اللغوية كانت باللغة الإنجليزية، كما بينت نتائج البحث ضعف في مهارات القراءة والكتابة باللغة العربية، نتيجة لصعوبة المفردات، والبناء اللغوي، وقلة التدريب على تلك المهارات في المدرسة.

الاتجاهات الوالدية تنحاز إلى اللغة الإنجليزية على حساب اللغة العربية، ويوصي هذا البحث إلى تعزيز الوعي لكل من الوالدين والطلاب بأهمية الكفاءة في اللغة العربية، فهي ضرورية للحفاظ على الوحدة القومية، والهوية الوطنية للأجيال القادمة، فاللغة جزء لا يتجزأ من الهوية الوطنية. بمجرد أن يتجاوز استخدام اللغة الأجنبية 50٪، فإنها تحقق بسرعة السيطرة الكاملة في جيل واحد أو أقل، مما يؤدي إلى فقدان الاستمرارية الثقافية والتماسك الاجتماعي.

الكلمات المفتاحية: ثنائية اللغة، المدارس الدولية، الهوية، لغة الوالدين، نقص القدرات اللغوية

### 1. Introduction

Identity holds critical significance in shaping individual perceptions, behaviors, and interactions within society. It embodies the interconnectedness and solidarity among individuals within a society. It fosters stability, resilience, and collective progress. When individuals feel a sense of belonging, they are more likely to uphold social norms, engage in prosocial behaviors. In turn, this facilitates the functioning of institutions, promotes civic engagement, and mitigates the risk of social fragmentation or unrest.

Furthermore, identity plays a pivotal role in fostering individual well-being and psychological flourishing. Humans are inherently social beings, and the quality of social relationships profoundly influences mental health and overall life satisfaction, and protect against feelings of isolation, loneliness, and alienation. It denotes the

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characteristics shared by individuals within societies, emerging from social interactions and belongingness to communities (Norton, 2014).

It is very clear that the use of the parent's tongue language is a symbol of national pride, a symbol of identity, a means of communication within the family and the local community, a means of development and cultural support; as the language of communication, preserver, guide, and language of national cultural (Kartini, Sahidin, 2021). It serves as a conduit for expressing values, beliefs, and traditions, thereby constituting an integral component of a culture's heritage and identity. Consequently, a society forfeits a portion of its creative potential when individuals are estranged from their cultural authenticity due to language loss (Rabiah, 2012).

Nowadays, English has attained a ubiquitous status as an international lingua franca (Kim, 2008). A larger number of individuals speak English as a second or foreign language compared to native speakers (Loginova, Gvozdeva, 2019). Nowadays, the impact of bilingualism has been profoundly felt in recent years, especially with the emergence of novel communication technologies, which, while fostering interconnectedness, also herald significant sociolinguistic transformations (Warschauer, 2000).

The connection between language and identity is profound, as evidenced by the term parents' tongue. A strong identity encompasses various aspects of our personalities, and a community often expresses its identity through the languages it uses for instruction. A healthy society makes choices that foster harmonious communities and confident individuals, and fortunately, these objectives typically align. Decades of research have consistently shown that students who receive education in their parent's tongue tend to perform better academically and continue to excel throughout their schooling. UNESCO continues to disseminate these research findings, emphasizing the importance of multilingual education in fostering social harmony and productivity, global events have underscored the benefits of prioritizing social cohesion (May, 2017).

Multiple studies indicate that proficiency in a second language can influence proficiency in the first language, particularly when the second language is utilized more frequently or when proficiency surpasses that of the first language. Notably, Riyadh, the capital city of Saudi Arabia, boasts 43 international schools; there exists a potential risk of Arabic language attrition among Saudi individuals. The loss of one's native tongue can engender a sense of alienation within one's own cultural milieu, despite immersion. According to Schmid & Kopke (2007), L2 speakers can assimilate so thoroughly into their second language that they achieve native-like proficiency but may feel estranged from their L1.

According to Norton (2014), extant literature acknowledges the significance of certain studies highlighting the impact of acquiring a second language (L2) on the erosion of an individual's native or primary language (L1). Despite the increasing hegemony of English as a global lingua franca, there remains a conspicuous paucity of scholarly investigations examining its influence on the utilization of the Arabic language among Saudi secondary stage students enrolled in International Schools. This research endeavor aims to address this gap by elucidating the disparities in students' linguistic usage patterns between Arabic and English, as well as exploring parental perceptions regarding the importance of the Arabic language.

## **2. Literature Review:**

### **2.1. Language-Identity Relationship**

Norton (2014) believes that language learning and identity (re)construction are strongly associated. Many scholars even regard language learning and identity as inseparable. He thinks that the recent burgeoning interest in identity comes because of a shift of interest from the psycholinguistic aspects of language learning to an emphasis on the sociological and anthropological dimensions of language acquisition.

The intricate relationship between language and identity is characterized by complexity, contradiction, and multifaceted dynamics that evolve across temporal and spatial contexts. It is co-constructed and contextualized within broader processes, which can either be coercive or collaborative, and intricately linked with classroom practices. Language functions as a primary conduit for the expression, transmission, adaptation, and transformation of culture. This underscores the notion that language mediates both the preservation of one's native culture and the acquisition of new cultural knowledge. Moreover, language facilitates the negotiation of linguistic membership within specific communities of practice, enabling individuals to assimilate into the community's systems, socio-cultural attitudes, values, and beliefs. Given that identity significantly influences communication, the act of communication plays a pivotal role in shaping and reshaping one's identity. Therefore, language emerges as a fundamental tool for both constructing and deconstructing identity (Demont-Heirich, Christof, 2005).

Language is a significant component of one's cultural identity. It is not only a means of communication, but also a fundamental aspect of personal identity, influencing how individuals perceive themselves and are perceived by others within the broader societal context. Language serves as a marker of group membership and solidarity.

The relationship between language and culture is intricate and mutually influential (Rabiah, 2012). Shared linguistic attributes have the potential to foster bonds among individuals and reinforce a collective sense of affiliation within a particular linguistic community or cultural cohort (Byram, 2006). Gunew and Rizvi (1994) emphasize that a profound connection exists between language and culture, where a substantial portion of cultural heritage is deeply embedded within the vernacular.

The loss of a language precipitates a rupture in culture, impeding the accurate conveyance of concerns, values, and interests. A language intimately intertwined with a culture possesses a unique capacity to articulate the nuances and richness of that culture, serving as a repository of collective wisdom, sensitivity, and identity. It encapsulates a culture's praises, laws, literature, songs, riddles, proverbs, cures, wisdom, and prayers, embodying the essence of cultural expression. Consequently, language stands as a symbolic representation of an entire culture, reflecting its intricacies and complexities. Losing a language signifies severing a profound connection to one's heritage, history, and collective consciousness, diminishing the capacity to preserve and transmit cultural knowledge, and eroding the very essence of a society's identity (Schmid & Kopke, 2007).

Social mobility and cohesion are closely intertwined with the acquisition of the predominant language/s within a society. Furthermore, language attitudes assume a pivotal role beyond their cognitive, affective, and behavioral implications; they serve as windows reflecting deeper social processes, including sentiments towards speaker groups and group affiliations. Analyses of language's role in identity construction underscore that attitudes not only serve as markers of identity but are intrinsic attributes of identity itself. Moreover, language attitudes reciprocally interact with language ideologies or preferences, thereby influencing processes of linguistic integration (Ubalde, Alarcón, Lapresta, 2017).

## **2.2. The Second Language- identity Relationship**

The process of acquiring proficiency in a second language engenders a multifaceted experience, engrossing individuals holistically on physical, cognitive, and emotional levels. Within this transformative journey, bilinguals navigate a complex interplay between their self-identification as native speakers of their primary language (L1) and their evolving status as learners of a secondary language (L2), a dynamic that shapes their evolving self-perception (Kim, 2020). Norton (2014) contends that the linguistic duality inherent in bilingualism perpetually engages individuals in an ongoing process of identity formation, whereby each linguistic interaction contributes to the construction and reconstruction of their sense of self.

Despite the internet's facilitation of global discourse, it presents challenges to the perpetuation of certain languages and the preservation of corresponding cultural identities. The proliferation of English as a lingua franca, propelled by processes of globalization, poses a threat to linguistic and cultural diversity, engendering apprehensions that the decline of a language entails concomitant losses in associated cultural heritage and knowledge (Nation, 2013).

In summation, while globalization introduces new avenues for communication and interaction, it concurrently poses obstacles to linguistic pluralism and cultural legacy. The tension between the ascension of English as a global medium and the safeguarding of indigenous languages underscores the intricate interplay among language, culture, and globalization within contemporary societal dynamics (Luk, 2022).

While English is esteemed for its instrumental value in facilitating professional advancement and career prospects, it is also perceived by certain segments of society as a potential threat to the primacy of national languages and as an agent that undermines local cultural heritage (Lee Su Kim, 2003; Lee Su Kim, 2008). This transition is indicative of a pronounced shift away from the utilization of indigenous or regional languages towards a more dominant linguistic medium (Graddol, 2006).

Fostering a sense of linguistic loyalty becomes imperative for all, particularly within bilingual communities, as rapid technological advancements loom as a major concern, potentially eroding people's commitment to their parent's tongue and national language. Such erosion could precipitate repercussions for national stability. Language loyalty denotes an individual's endeavor to preserve their native language amidst the tide of modernization, which threatens to diminish the cultural fabric of nations. Individuals who maintain loyalty to their language find it conducive to learning new languages. Moreover, bolstering linguistic stability and national unity can be reinforced by nurturing loyalty towards the parent's tongue, exemplifying a form of patriotism

towards one's country (Kartini, Sahidin, 2021). Numerous studies suggest that proficiency in a second language can impact proficiency in the first language, especially when the second language is utilized more frequently or when proficiency surpasses that of the first language (Norton, 2014).

Language attrition, defined as the loss of linguistic abilities or regression of specific grammatical properties and overall fluency in linguistic skills, impacts language use, lexical access, and grammatical integrity. Two pivotal factors influencing language attrition in bilinguals are the availability of input and the age of onset of reduction in input in their native language (Schmid, 2013). Research by Kopke (2007) reveals that second language (L2) speakers may become so integrated into using their L2 that they attain native-like proficiency in it while exhibiting foreignness in their L1. Consistent usage of L2 can lead to a reduction in L1 use and input, culminating in attrition of L1 knowledge over time, thereby impeding access to previously stored linguistic knowledge of the first language (Schmid & Kopke, 2011). While the field of language acquisition primarily focuses on language increase, it often neglects to explore language decline or attrition (Montru, Yoon, 2019).

Ecke and Hall (2013) elucidate that a shift in language use within the family sphere can engender a loss of intimacy and connection, disrupting the dynamics between parents and children. The loss of proficiency in the parent's tongue can have profound implications not only on educational development but also on psychological and emotional well-being, underscoring the significance of maintaining the first language for preserving cultural identity and familial ties. The pressure to embrace English as the primary language may compel individuals to perceive their home language as inferior (Fillmore, 2010).

Moreover, Treffers-Daller (2019) elucidates that the replacement of a native language with another can evoke feelings of insecurity and disconnection among individuals, resulting in a loss of fluency and authenticity in communication. This loss transcends mere linguistic proficiency, profoundly impacting cultural identity and collective creativity.

While bilinguals often possess a stronger and weaker language, achieving balanced bilingualism remains an ideal rather than a common occurrence. Bilinguals typically do not demonstrate equal proficiency in all four language skills (reading, writing, listening, and speaking) (Piller & Gerber, 2021). Language attitudes, observable in both bilingual and multilingual societies through language behavior, encompass a positive phenomenon known as language loyalty (Kartini, Sahidin, 2021).

Bilingual individuals, including both adults and children, tend to possess a smaller vocabulary in their parent's tongue compared to their monolingual counterparts. This phenomenon, known as bilingual vocabulary disadvantage, can be attributed to various factors, including limited exposure. Dividing one's waking hours between two languages results in reduced input for each language, ultimately impacting vocabulary acquisition, particularly in comprehension (Babayigit, Clarke, 2022).

The strong inclination of participants to integrate with English culture may stem from their early exposure to English, during a period when their cultural identity is still in flux. Additionally, participants may perceive themselves as outsiders to the English-speaking domain, leading them to identify with target language norms as a means of mitigating feelings of outsider. Consequently, EFL learners may perceive their non-nativeness as a hindrance to language learning, with the desire to integrate with the foreign culture correlating positively with language learning success (Sa'd, 2017).

### **2.3. Language Shift:**

Why is language endangerment a serious concern? The language that is spoken in the home while children are growing up expresses a people's culture, values, thoughts, and world view. Loss of language is almost always accompanied by social and cultural disruptions. When a language disappears, the intangible heritage of all human society is diminished. Concern about language endangerment is centered on the factors which motivate speakers to abandon their language and the social and psychological consequences of language death for the community. Those concerned about language endangerment recognize the implications for communities first and foremost. In addition, loss of linguistic diversity also impacts our knowledge of language and communications as a human phenomenon (Lewis, 2019).

Dixon (1997) highlights that as a minority language diminishes in practical utility for daily interactions, the dominant language or lingua franca gains ascendancy and allure. Once a lingua franca surpasses 50% usage, it swiftly attains dominance within a single generation or less, precipitating a loss of cultural continuity and social cohesion vital for the preservation of meaningful cultural identity. The loss of a language entails significant ramifications for individuals (Atifnigar, 2021).

Throughout history, the global linguistic landscape has traditionally maintained a state of equilibrium, characterized by the natural evolution and transformation of languages across generations. Extinct languages were typically supplanted by emergent ones. However, in the past five centuries, approximately half of the world's known languages have vanished, disrupting this equilibrium. Dominant languages have swiftly expanded, encroaching upon and displacing some languages, which are now vanishing sans replacement (Nation, 2013).

Presently, the global linguistic landscape comprises approximately 6,800 languages; however, a striking observation is that 90% of the world's population communicates primarily in just the top 100 most prevalent languages. Linguistic prognostications suggest a dire fate for a significant portion of these languages, with estimates ranging from 50% to 90% facing extinction by the close of the current century (McWhorter, 2002).

Projections by numerous linguists portend a grim scenario for the linguistic diversity of the future, positing that by the ensuing century, approximately half of the world's languages may face extinction, leaving only around 600 extant languages. This trajectory is compounded by the annual demise of 10 languages, indicating a steady escalation in the rate of language loss, with an estimated 3,000 languages facing extinction over the course of a century (Yamamoto, Masayo, 2005).

Irrespective of the specific factors precipitating language loss, the process typically entails the dissolution of the community and socioeconomic structures that formerly sustained the language. As minority groups relinquish control over their local environments, their traditional ways of life become economically untenable. This linguistic erosion is paralleled by a decline in cultural identity, self-esteem, and communal prestige (Molaie, 2016).

Language shift delineates a process whereby changes occur in the linguistic landscape of a community or society, it denotes the gradual waning of one language in favor of another within a given populace (Kandler, Unger, Steele, 2010). Such linguistic transitions typically unfold as speakers of a heritage language gradually forsake their native tongue in favor of an alternative language. Various catalysts, including urbanization, migration, globalization, governmental policies, economic incentives, and cultural assimilation, can precipitate language shift. Over time, unchecked language shift may lead to the endangerment or even extinction of the heritage language within the community (Simmons, Margaret, 2003).

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Some scholars perceive changes observed in the native language of second language learners as instances of incomplete L1 acquisition rather than language loss, positing that exposure to L2 at the expense of L1 during childhood may hinder the acquisition of necessary linguistic properties of L1 (Jessner, 2021). Incomplete acquisition occurs when individuals have not fully acquired all aspects of their L1 due to factors such as insufficient exposure or input. However, research suggests that language proficiency can be regained through continued exposure and use, particularly during childhood when the brain is more adaptable (Genesee, 2008). Bilingual individuals may exhibit incomplete acquisition in one or both languages, contingent upon the quality and quantity of input received (Ecke, Hall, 2013).

There is interference, transfer, or crosslinguistic influence between languages. These terms highlight how features of one language can affect the production or comprehension of another language in a bilingual individual. It's important to note that these phenomena occur because the less activated language is never completely inhibited, and elements from both languages can interact during language processing and production (Marinis & Armon-Lotem 2015).

As pointed out by Fishman (1972), it is important to distinguish between societal language dominance and language dominance in the individual. the exposure to and use of languages are key to the development of language dominance; and that dominance can change over time. Thus, language dominance is a complex phenomenon with linguistic, sociolinguistic, and psycholinguistic dimensions (Snape & Kupisch 2016).

An endangered language is one that faces the risk of disappearing in the foreseeable future, with one-third of the world's languages currently in danger of extinction. Factors contributing to language endangerment include shifts in language use, particularly towards dominant languages used in education, leading to diminished transmission of heritage languages from older to younger generations. Eventually, the decline in the number of speakers using the language as their first or primary language may lead to its eventual extinction (Lewis, 2019).

The decline of a language occurs gradually over several generations, with key stages including children ceasing to speak their parent's tongue, a lack of language acquisition by subsequent generations, and elderly individuals being the sole speakers of the language without passing it on to younger generations (Jorda, 2015).

#### 2.4. Language Death

The phrase 'language death' sounds as stark and final as any other in which that word makes its unwelcome appearance. And it has similar implications and resonances. To say that a language is dead is like saying that a person is dead. It could be no other way— for languages have no existence without people. A language dies when nobody speaks it anymore (Crystal, 2014)

Language death occurs when a language becomes susceptible to extinction due to dominance by another language, leading to a decline in its usage over time. Harrison (2008) outlines stages of language death, including children no longer speaking their parent's tongue at home, subsequent generations not learning the language, and a generational gap where grandparents are the only speakers of the language, while younger generations cease using it (Atifnigar, 2021).

Here are some causes of language death:

**Violence:** Instances of warfare, invasions, and colonization have historically resulted in the physical elimination or alteration of languages, leading to the extinction of indigenous languages (Campbell, 1994). Also, restrictive language policies; When governments or state authorities implement stringent regulations mandating the assimilation of ethnic-cultural minorities into the dominant or official culture (Wurm, 1991).

**Natural disasters and diseases;** Catastrophic events such as tsunamis, exemplified by recent occurrences in Indonesia, can result in the decimation of populations or their displacement to such an extent that speakers are compelled to integrate into another culture, adopting its language and customs as their own. **Economic pressures:** The erosion of languages can also stem from economic imperatives, wherein speakers perceive that their children's prospects for socio-economic advancement are enhanced by acquiring proficiency in a particular language. Within a span of two generations, the original language may face the risk of extinction due to diminishing transmission rates (Dorian, 1982).

**Cultural prestige:** Often intertwined with economic considerations, the phenomenon of cultural prestige plays a pivotal role in language endangerment. Languages face imminent threats when a foreign language attains cultural cachet, typically associated with affluence or social status. As the cultural or economic elite adopts the prestigious language, its diffusion to peripheral regions accelerates, resulting in a decline in the transmission of indigenous languages among younger generations (Campbell, 1994).

#### 3. Methodology

- **Methods:** This study employs a qualitative approach, incorporating both survey administration and interviews conducted by the researcher. The sample consisted of 29 female students and 27 parents. The students were selected via simple random sampling, and they responded to the surveys. Parents were selected via purposeful sampling, specifically as the parents of the students who responded. Additionally, 11 students and 5 parents volunteered for interviews.
- **Instruments:** The questionnaire was meticulously developed in English to investigate participants' language usage patterns across various contexts, such as home, school, and social gatherings. The student survey consisted of fifteen questions covering language frequency, proficiency, encountered difficulties, and confidence levels in both languages. Each participant underwent individual interviews, and to ensure data credibility, participants were given the opportunity to review the report for any misunderstandings and to validate initial findings. Moreover, the study explores parents' perceptions of the importance of Arabic. Data collection methods included questionnaires and interviews. The sample comprised 27 parents, who were parents of the participating students. The questionnaire administered to parents was formulated in Arabic and consisted of ten questions exploring parents' perceptions of the importance of the Arabic language. The surveys underwent pilot testing among two small groups of participants, comprising students and parents who were not included in the final survey. Following refinement based

on feedback, the surveys were distributed to 40 students via WhatsApp. Recipients were encouraged to provide elaborations or insights related to the survey topics. Out of the 40 students, 29 returned the survey, and the responses, including any provided explanations, were analyzed. The survey was conducted in a non-anonymous manner to facilitate follow-up interviews. Participants were requested to provide their names and phone numbers. Additionally, another survey was sent to the parents of the students. Of the 29 parents who received the survey, 27 returned it. Both students and parents were asked to indicate their willingness to participate in interviews.

Subsequently, 11 students and 5 parents volunteered for interviews. The interviews were conducted via Google Meet using a semi-structured approach, with predetermined questions focusing on patterns of Arabic language usage among students, their preferences, and parental attitudes towards the usage of Arabic as a medium of communication. The interviews ranged in duration from 30 to 40 minutes and were recorded with the participants' consent. This study employs a qualitative approach, incorporating both survey administration and interviews conducted by the researcher. The sample consisted of 29 female students and 27 parents, students were selected via simple random sampling, who responded to the surveys, while parents were selected via purposeful sample. Additionally, 11 students and 5 parents volunteered for interviews.

- **Research Questions:**

1. What are the usage patterns of Arabic among students in international schools?
2. How do parents perceive the importance of Arabic language?

- **Data Collection and Analysis:**

Descriptive analysis was employed to thoroughly examine and analyze responses from both the questionnaire and interviews. The researcher collected data by administering surveys, then organized and analyzed the responses. Interviews were recorded, and coding was applied to analyze the recorded data. Initially, the recordings were transcribed, followed by a detailed examination of the transcriptions. Line-by-line analysis of the transcriptions was conducted to identify basic ideas reflecting students' language usage patterns in Arabic and English, as well as their parents' perception of the importance of the Arabic language and shared experiences. Interpretations and findings were derived, and key observations were comprehensively summarized.

- **Limitations:**

It is imperative to acknowledge the limitations of this study, primarily the small sample size.

#### **4. Findings and conclusion:**

The survey findings provide valuable insights into the usage pattern of Arabic among secondary students attending international schools. English predominates as the primary language for most (if not all) of students engaging in activities such as reading, writing, and consuming media in English. Many students show a strong preference for American cinema and English-language content for both educational and recreational purposes, citing ease of comprehension. Additionally, they prefer browsing the internet in English and frequently watch American television series from a young age. This trend is not unique but reflects similar patterns observed in other places like Malaysia, Singapore, and London, where indigenous languages are gradually being replaced by dominant languages, particularly English (David, 2001).

The research findings suggest a limited proficiency in Arabic vocabulary and comprehension among students, attributed to challenges in accessing Arabic texts and listening materials across various academic subjects. Difficulties with specific Arabic vocabulary and comprehension of different dialects and accents exacerbate these challenges. Inadvertent code-switching to English during conversations has led to misunderstandings about communicative intentions, with some interpreting this behavior as indicative of pretentiousness, while remaining unaware of the underlying struggle to articulate thoughts proficiently in Arabic. Such code shifts indicate a lack of loyalty towards the national language (Bozdağ & Bilge, 2021) and suggest that students have passive knowledge of Arabic (Becker, 2023). Code-switching is commonly accepted in interactions among students in international schools.

Students have expressed that English appears comparatively straightforward in terms of language proficiency, while Arabic presents numerous challenges. The extensive lexicon and diverse dialectal variations within Arabic pose significant obstacles. While English involves fewer hindrances, Arabic, particularly in its formalized register (Fusha), presents complexities in comprehension and pronunciation. Mastery of Arabic grammar rules and intricate verb conjugations proves daunting, especially given the pragmatic intricacies of day-

to-day usage, where achieving grammatical precision is infrequent. Students' language attitudes, including preferences and usage, reveal critical dimensions of their allegiance to the Arabic language.

Literacy plays a crucial role in language maintenance and transmission across generations (Becker, 2023). One student highlights a significant obstacle in their quest to improve their writing and reading abilities in Arabic, which stems from inconsistent exposure and practice. Despite being native Arabic speakers, the predominant use of English within international school settings limits their opportunities for immersion in Arabic writing and reading. Consequently, their mastery of Arabic, particularly Classical Arabic (Fusha), may not reach its full potential, especially considering difficulties in grammar and vocabulary.

Another challenge students face in serious subject speaking is a lack of confidence, often feeling inadequate when discussing serious topics in Arabic. Opportunities to refine speaking skills in authentic contexts at school are limited, and students struggle to find the right words to express ideas or concepts. These findings highlight a generation grappling with limited proficiency in Arabic speaking and writing, leading to difficulties in adequately expressing thoughts in Arabic.

Furthermore, the participants acknowledged their struggle to effectively engage in academic discussions in Arabic. Sometimes, this struggle can also be understood as a link between language and 'subject identity'. Learning a subject is akin to joining a social group that identifies with that subject (e.g., historians, physicists), and it is necessary to learn their language (Byram, 2006).

Despite Arabic's recognized significance as the language of the Quran, students find it challenging to read or understand the Holy Quran. The researcher asked, "Do you find it easy to read or memorize The Holy Quran?" One respondent acknowledged the need to improve their Arabic proficiency before being able to read the Quran properly. Another respondent expressed a desire to enhance proficiency in Arabic Fus7a to better understand The Holy Quran.

It's notable that acquiring English linguistic skills often involves pressure to neglect one's native language. Consequently, students may not attain proficiency in their parents' tongue. This erosion of language proficiency can ultimately lead to the erosion or even obliteration of the social identity cultivated within their home environment.

It seems that a significant number of respondents have adopted the viewpoint that the Arabic language is no longer indispensable, except for religious purposes, often emphasizing its significance as the language of the Holy Quran. At the same time, most students recognize the importance of English, citing its status as an international language, its relevance in job interviews, its usefulness for overseas travel and understanding lectures, as well as its significance for accessing knowledge, given that many references are in English. Overall, it appears that many respondents acknowledge the diminishing necessity of the Arabic language outside of religious contexts. The prevalent language of communication among them is no longer solely Arabic but a combination of Arabic and English.

Throughout the interviews, both English and Arabic were observed as communication codes chosen by the students, despite the shared Saudi background of the researcher and the students, and Arabic being their native tongue. Language switching is commonly utilized among their Saudi colleagues and friends. The participants collectively expressed the sentiment that English is perceived as an easier language and elicits feelings of pride. They find English usage more convenient than Arabic.

The students exhibit a propensity towards deeming Arabic as secondary in importance, which can be construed as indicative of their evolving identity. In their engagements within Saudi social spheres encompassing familial, social, and professional domains, there is a notable proclivity towards employing a linguistic amalgamation of Arabic and English.

Upon probing their perceptions regarding the role of Arabic in delineating their identity and cultural heritage, the predominant viewpoint among participants underscores its significance primarily within the framework of Islamic discourse, thereby implying an oversight of its broader cultural import. This phenomenon hints at a deficiency in acknowledging the expansive cultural relevance embedded within the Arabic language. Furthermore, the proclivity towards employing colloquial expressions intimates a preference for facile communication modalities, thus suggesting a waning sense of esteem towards Arabic and a diminished level of allegiance to it across diverse communicative contexts.

In terms of parental perceive towards the significance of the Arabic language, there is a discernible inclination towards prioritizing English proficiency. This inclination is manifested through the increasing enrollment of children in international schools aimed at mastering the English language. The assertion that



language serves primarily as a medium of communication rather than a constituent of identity reflects a predominant perspective among parents favoring the prioritization of English proficiency in their children's educational pursuits. This inclination is substantiated by the enrollment of children in international schools, where emphasis is placed on mastering English. The presence of 43 international schools in Riyadh alone underscores the burgeoning demand for English-language education.

When queried about potential regrets concerning their daughters' enrollment in international schools, parents uniformly expressed contentment with their decision. Moreover, when asked if they would endorse international schools, they responded positively, indicating their endorsement of this educational option. Even when prompted about potential challenges encountered in international schools, they primarily cited difficulties with academic subjects, seemingly disregarding any concerns regarding deficiencies in the Arabic language. When asked about potential regrets concerning the potential erosion of their daughters' proficiency in Arabic, parents generally asserted that students possess comprehension and speaking abilities in Arabic, which they deem necessary skills. These collective responses highlight a negative attitude towards the Arabic language.

Additionally, parents acknowledged that their daughters' shortcomings in Arabic primarily pertained to writing and reading skills, implying a lack of recognition of the importance of these skills in preserving the Arabic language. This underscores the necessity for interventions aimed at raising awareness about the significance of maintaining proficiency in both languages, thereby ensuring the preservation of cultural and linguistic heritage among future generations.

Despite recognizing their daughters' deficiencies in Arabic, particularly in reading, writing, and articulating academic concepts effectively, parents exhibited a sense of indifference towards the Arabic language. When questioned about their daughters' ability to comprehend mathematics and sciences in English, parents affirmed this capability, further highlighting the potential cultural ramifications of deficiencies in the Arabic language. One parent expressed concern over her daughter's struggle to read and understand the Quran. Overall, interviews with parents revealed minimal concern regarding their daughters' proficiency in Arabic.

In summary, parental attitudes towards the Arabic language suggest a prevailing tendency towards prioritizing English proficiency, with limited recognition of the importance of maintaining proficiency in Arabic. This underscores the need for educational interventions aimed at promoting bilingualism and preserving linguistic heritage.

In international schools, there is full immersion in English linguistic skills, which negatively impacts students' Arabic linguistic skills. Some students may receive linguistic input from multiple sources, such as community groups or complementary schools, which can enhance their proficiency in their native language. If not attending an institute or not having a tutor, parents should teach their children the mother tongue. In the research, the predominant responses from parents indicated the absence of tutors, attendance at institutions, or any kind of support concerning the Arabic language. Additionally, two respondents revealed they use English even in interactions with their parents.

Parental attitudes suggest a lack of recognition of the importance of maintaining proficiency in Arabic languages, driven by the perception that English proficiency is imperative for success in an English-dominated global landscape. In response to inquiries regarding the perception of Arabic's relation to identity, one respondent stated, "My sons and daughters can speak Arabic, but as for English, they have to learn it." They emphasized that proficiency in English offers greater job opportunities and access to scientific research. Another respondent's viewpoint was that this is what we should do for our sons and daughters to guarantee them good positions.

Furthermore, parental attitudes highlight a failure to recognize the importance of preserving proficiency in Arabic. Languages symbolize identities and are utilized to express identities by their speakers. There is frequently a strong connection between language and a sense of national identity, with individuals often categorized based on their language usage. The declining proficiency in Arabic, notably among students in international schools, suggests a potential erosion of their cultural identity nurtured within the familial context.

Parental support for bilingualism may be driven by their negative attitudes towards heritage languages (Aldukhayel, 2023). Additionally, the perception that English is necessary for social acceptance can lead to language loss within families. Addressing this issue requires recognizing the value of home languages and providing adequate support for bilingualism and cultural identity in educational settings.

Maintaining proficiency in the Arabic language necessitates a positive linguistic stance, alongside proactive measures to cultivate its development amidst global challenges and endeavors to mitigate the influence of other languages. Recommendations extrapolated from this study underscore the imperative of conserving heritage

languages spoken by parents. Efforts should concentrate on fostering parental awareness regarding the significance of upholding competence in Arabic. Mass media platforms, such as television and social media, as well as educational institutions, assume crucial roles in cultivating a favorable disposition towards Arabic language acquisition among students enrolled in international schools, emphasizing the accurate and effective usage of Arabic.

In general, parental perspectives on language proficiency, particularly the inclination towards prioritizing English over Arabic, reflect a prevalent notion that English competency is indispensable for navigating a predominantly English-speaking world. This underscores the necessity for interventions aimed at heightening consciousness regarding the importance of sustaining proficiency in both languages, thereby safeguarding cultural and linguistic heritage for posterity.

The preservation of cultural identity hinges upon the preservation of its associated language. Language loss not only signifies the disappearance of a linguistic system but also signifies the erosion of the cultural ethos it embodies. Hence, it is imperative to transmit languages to succeeding generations to forestall cultural dilution (Purwati, 2018).

## 5. Conclusion:

Based on the findings of the research, several recommendations can be proposed:

**Promotion of active usage of the Arabic language:** It is recommended to implement Arabic language programs and initiatives aimed at language maintenance to encourage and sustain the active use of the Arabic language among students attending international schools. Providing diverse opportunities for language utilization across various contexts can facilitate the continuous development and utilization of the mother tongue.

**Heightened awareness of the importance of parents' tongue;** efforts should be directed towards increasing parental and student awareness regarding the significance of the mother tongue, emphasizing its pivotal role in cultural identity preservation and effective communication. Measures should be taken to prevent the relegation of Arabic to private domains of life.

**Revision of perceptions regarding the parents' tongue;** recognizing the influence of language attitudes on linguistic behaviors, there is a need to reinforce the importance of the mother tongue in shaping national identity, particularly amidst a contemporary trend of shifting away from the usage of mother tongue languages. Addressing parental attitudes that prioritize English proficiency over Arabic proficiency is essential. Educating parents about the value of maintaining proficiency in Arabic, emphasizing its role in fostering societal cohesion, is imperative.

**Institutional support for language development;** schools and educational institutions should actively contribute to language development in Arabic by providing resources and support. Incorporating Arabic language learning initiatives into the curriculum and offering language enhancement programs can facilitate language proficiency among students.

In conclusion, policymakers, educators, and parents can collaborate effectively to ensure the preservation and promotion of Arabic language proficiency among students enrolled in international schools. This proactive approach is poised to safeguard heritage languages and nurture a sense of cultural identity among Arab students within the international school setting.

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